

Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat

OCTOBER 1985

EXCURSION - NEWS SHEET

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| Meeting | October 4th | Seals and Sea Lions - Mr Ross
Warnecki |
| Meeting | November 1st | Frogs - Dr Angus Martin |
| Excursion | October 6th | Enfield - Mrs Pat Murphy |
| Excursion | November 3rd | Trawalla - Mr Ivan Filey |



President: Miss H Burgess 312210
Secretary: Miss J Binns 323670
Treasurer: Mrs F Williamson 327631
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Meetings, as specified, are held in the Art
Building of the School of Mines and Industries,
Lydiard Street South, Ballarat, commencing 7.30pm.
EXCURSIONS, AS SPECIFIED, COMMENCE FROM
CROCKERS, Cnr. STURT and ARMSTRONG STREETS,
BALLARAT, AT 9.30 am FOR FULL DAY OUTINGS,
OR AT 1.30 pm FOR HALF DAY.

WESTERN VICTORIAN F.N.C.A. - COLAC CAMPOUT

The Spring Campout will be hosted by the Colac Club during the weekend of October 25 - 27.

Participants are to arrange their own accommodation but bus transport is organized for the Saturday outings. Bookings should be made through our Secretary, Joanne, by October 8. Full details of accommodation and transport are available.

As this is the 25th anniversary of the Association a special programme is to be presented on the Saturday evening. Our Club is to compile a slide presentation of ten selected slides of special features of the Ballarat region. Members are asked to submit slides, for selection, to a member of Committee prior to the Committee meeting of October 22.

EXCURSION, SUNDAY OCTOBER 6

For this Enfield Forest excursion we will be joined by members of the Ballarat Bushwalking and Outdoor Club who are looking forward to gaining better understandings of the flora and fauna from the outing with us. We, in turn, look forward to their company. Pat Murphy, as leader, has prepared a good programme and has copies of relevant map details available.

"ANIMALS AND PLANTS OF NEW HOLLAND"

This is the title of an exhibition of 300 original natural history prints from most of the works published between 1703 and 1825 ie. many "first" illustrations of Australian animals and plants for scientific purposes. Works may be acquired! October 29 - November 8. Gryphon Gallery, Melbourne C.A.E., Gate 4, Grattan St, Carlton.

SEPTEMBER EXCURSION

Twenty people took part in a working bee at the Linton block which is situated near the 92 km post on the Glenelg Highway and first past the township of Linton.

Members spent most of the day eradicating the noxious thistles, briar roses, etc. or fumigating the great many rabbit burrows that were in the old mullock heaps. At midday we stopped work for a rest and ate our lunch in the pleasantly warm spring sunshine.

The day was not all work, however, and around mid-afternoon we all went for a short walk. Our first observation was the stand of Black She-oaks (*Casuarina littoralis*) which, I think, would be the best example in the Ballarat district. Some of the other plants examined included a lovely form of the red flowering Common Correa (*Correa reflexa*), Nodding Greenhoods (*Pterostylis nutans*), Tall Greenhood (*Pterostylus longifolia*), Guinea Flower (*Hibbertia australis*), Australian Buttercup (*Ranunculus lappaceus*), Common Flat-pea (*Platylabium obtusangulum*) and various sundews.

One highlight of the day was hearing the Speckled Warbler and than finally seeing it amongst the lower branches of a she-oak. Some other birds seen were Yellow Robin, Grey Fantail, Blue Wren, Striated Thornbill, Goshawk, White Throated Tree creeper.

For its size, the Linton block contains a very wide range of plants and is well worth maintaining in its original state. Therefore, very many thanks go to all those who participated in the working bee.

P. Murphy.

CLUB CAMPOUT TO MELVILLE CAVES

On Friday 13th September we set out from a very wet, bleak Ballarat bound for Melville Caves just out of Rheola which is close to Moliagul. We thought we were mad to even contemplate camping in such unpleasant weather. We arrived at about 9.15 pm to find everybody set up and already in bed. In the darkness we really had very little idea of our physical surroundings so the Saturday morning was a delightful surprise.

The camping/picnic area was lovely and the weather perfect. The sky was clear, bright blue and we were able to eat our breakfast outside in the sun. I was astonished at the change from home. The surroundings fascinated our children who loved exploring the rocks and boulders. At about 10.30 we were joined by a carload of people from Castlemaine and Don Franklin from Bendigo. We all made each others acquaintance over a cup of billy tea and one of Helen's pumpkin scones (look out Flo!). Then we set off to the summit car park. Here we discovered what an asset to our day Jim Willis was. He had come up from Melbourne to speak to the Castlemaine club the previous night and had decided to spend the Saturday with us. His extensive botanical knowledge was much appreciated, but perhaps of equal importance and interest to me was to see his boundless enthusiasm and energy. He has certainly not become blasé with increasing years. He raced along tracks and was pleased with each new find and seemed thrilled to add about six more plants to his list of those known to occur locally.

We admired the view from the lookout and poked about amongst the "caves", enjoyed the warm sunshine, numerous bird calls, a variety of plants and the scent of *Acacia calamefolia* which was at its peak. It was quite extensive and made a lovely picture with its deep golden yellow blooms. We also saw *Acacia deanei* and *Acacia verniciflua* (Varnish wattle) flowering.

We gathered together for a picnic lunch at the carpark and enjoyed chatting with the Castlemaine folk and Don. Don Franklin is the chief author of the book about Eucalypts of the Bendigo area and on both days his knowledge was much appreciated.

After lunch we set off on a longish ramble through interesting terrain. At times our ramble was more like a sprint as we had to keep up with Jim Willis who was keen to cover as much ground as possible before catching his train back to Melbourne. We saw some quite pink Early Nancy flowers, many blue *Caladenia difformis*, correa, buttercups, golden stars and quite a few orchid leaves which have yet to flower. At one place amongst shallow pools in flat rocky areas we came across a dense patch of Early Nancies. They were lovely and Jim commented that he had never seen such a patch. A few mosquito orchids were found and the children thought they were well named.

Throughout the day we heard bird calls, and observed many species. In the evening after tea cooked on the campfire we strolled around in the dusk and enjoyed that last burst of bird activity. We were pleased to observe, close up, just above Jean and Bill Spicer's tent, a pair of tawny frogmouths. They did not seem to be bothered by us and we had a good look at them in the spotlight.

Next we drew our chairs around the fire. First Greg wrote down the names of all the birds we had seen and the tally was about 45. More were subsequently added on the Sunday. The night was dark and perfectly clear. The stars were really vivid and we watched a satellite pass across the sky. There was no wind and it was not cold. Greg played us a number of tunes on his mouth organ, Don played some songs on his tenor recorder and Tony sang us songs in Welsh. Amazing what talents people have that surface in different environments. We enjoyed our music and singing greatly despite some opposition by a group of young people nearby!

Joanne and Peter cooked us all pancakes and we cooked bananas with chocolate melted in them. These were washed down with Greg's billy tea. All up a most relaxing, interesting, friendly day and evening.

Next day was again just beautiful weather. In the morning some of us climbed up a steep slope opposite camp in a vain attempt to reach the caves, while others packed up tents. We travelled in convoy beyond the top carpark along a gravel road. We paused to admire a native White Cypress Pine (sometimes called Murray Pine). At the end of the road we walked down into a valley. There wasn't a track but walking was easy and pleasant. Here again the wattles were beautiful as were some lovely specimens of Blakely's Red Gums. At one spot there were hundreds of seedlings of the latter which Don said were two or three years old despite being only about 30 cm high.

Heather (7) was very impressed with an earth star fungus we found as it looked like a volcano i.e. released smoke (spores) when pressed lightly. The other fungi we saw several times were morels. We saw brown goshawks circling and then Alan's very sharp eyes noticed a tiny nest of a grey fantail. We watched the mother flit about and sit in it briefly. Greg was so busy watching that a bull ant found him easy prey. The frail nest was made of cobwebs. We watched for a time to observe a spotted pardalote come to feed her young but we must have looked too intimidating. We saw a shining cuckoo and a scarlet robin while we sat in a pleasant spot for a while.

Around one o'clock we headed back to the cars and since some people have a much better sense of direction than I, we found them easily. During lunch we watched a little eagle soaring and it swooped down quite close to us. After a leisurely meal we headed home leaving the others to another walk. It was a great weekend which we all thoroughly enjoyed. Thanks to those who helped plan it and also to everyone like Pat and Helen for always so patiently identifying plants for me.

REPORT ON SEPTEMBER MEETING

Because of illness, Frances Poole unfortunately could not be with us for the promised talk on orchids. However about twenty dried specimens from the Club herbarium were displayed for our inspection.

Nevertheless, our time was far from wasted as we were taken by Peter Fry on a trip around Australia New Zealand, North America and Europe at absolutely no cost to ourselves. If members came to the meeting because of a specific interest in orchids they were not to be disappointed. Peter showed slides of some twenty Australian orchids commonly, and not so commonly, found in Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia.

Peter also showed slides of a wide variety of flora and fauna which he has taken over the past twenty years. Included in the flora were Acacia, Banksia, Callistemon, Blackboys (including one which had developed a branch on which Gavin noticed a native bee!), Boronia, Bush Peas, Lilies, Cactus, and even an unusual fungus.

The selection of fauna included a variety of species ranging through possums, wallabies and spiders as well as humans of various nationalities! The most interesting of these, to me, being the N. American Indians with their novel method of taking salmon in their traditional way with poles which appeared to be about thirty feet long. With a hook end, these were used to gaff the salmon. If I tried that on a fishing trip I would be barred from all waters for life! However as in most of Australia, the indigenous people have rights to take fish and animals in their traditional fashion, and rightly so.

Also shown were some excellent bird photographs. They included the Crimson Rosella, surely one of our most beautiful as well as friendly birds; a pair of stone plovers (which I am told is also known as a stone curlew or bush thickknee). Peter was reluctant to say where the picture was taken.

Humming birds were also featured and someone mentioned that our closest kin to these is the spinebill, of which there are only two varieties in Australia. Coincidentally, as I was writing this an Eastern Spinebill has landed about two feet away from me in the ivy outside my window. I wonder if it is trying to tell me something?!

Other items of interest which Peter mentioned were zoos and parks he had visited on his travels. In particular he dwelt on those in Toronto (Canada) and Frankfurt (West Germany). In these places he saw flora and fauna which, in some cases, were rare or endangered in their own countries. This seemed very important to me as there are many well meaning conservationists who strongly oppose the removal of rare species from their natural habitat, even though this may provide the means of building up their numbers for eventual release in their natural territory, thus assisting in the survival of the species.

In passing Peter spoke of Peter Scott's Wildfowl Trust in England where a number of threatened species has been strengthened in population by this means. (Gerald Durrell's similar project with animals in his Jersey sanctuary was brought to my mind.)

To continue, we were shown some impressive shots of the Grand Coolee Dam and told of the benefits it has provided to the surrounding country by means of both power supply and irrigation. It is the second highest power producing dam in the world (behind a Russian dam). It is expected, soon, to gain the position as first.

The canal trip which Peter took us on from Chester on the Welsh border to Llangollen brought many memories back to me and here, particularly, I would congratulate Peter on his expertise with the camera.

A most informative and enjoyable evening was had by all who attended. It brought happy memories to some, food for thought to others and, to still others, both. Thank-you Peter.

Tony Barlow.

Further Notes on:

-- PROTEACEAE -- Cont'd from Sept. issue:

Three genera are common near Ballarat (Banksia, Hakea, Grevillea) and one not common (Persoonia).

1. Banksia : Flowers very numerous in a dense, erect, cylindrical spike, which becomes hardened and cone-like. The individual fruits (follicles) are partly embedded in the axis of the cone.

2. Hakea : Flowers are seldom bright red (compare Waratah) and never in large dense clusters.

Fruit is a leathery or woody follicle. There are 2 seeds in each follicle. Seeds have a large terminal wing.

3. Persoonia: (Geebung) Flowers are solitary and axillary or in small clusters. Yellow. Fruit is a relatively large drupe.

4. Grevillea : Flowers seldom bright red, never in large dense heads. Fruit is a leathery follicle (never woody. Seeds are winged all round or wingless.

There are about 250 species of Grevillea, most of them Australian endemics. See Wrigley and Fagg " Australian Native Plants " page 215 for a summary of the types of inflorescence.

H.H.

CONSERVATION OF AUSTRALIAN ANCHOR PLANT

The subcommittee formed at the last meeting to prepare a submission for assistance from the National Program (Bicentennial) has planned and proposed the project. This aims to conserve and re establish the Anchor Plant in this region. Copy of the proposal is available for members perusal. If successful, it should provide an interesting and worthwhile challenge to the Club.